

The Power of Persistence

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for; but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Romans 8:26

The family tree in some people's lives is more like a forest. Their extended family includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, second cousins...and on and on and on. In other families, there just aren't many relatives—and "family ties" are formed with nonrelated individuals, such as friends, neighbors, or fellow church members. Whether your extended family is large or small, related or unrelated, you can bless these people in your lives by praying for them.

How can we pray powerfully for our extended family? As with any prayer, persistence is the key. Persistent prayer is illustrated in a story Jesus told His disciples about a widow and a judge. The woman approached the judge, asking for justice against her enemy. The judge refused to help, but she kept pestering him, resolutely determined to get things right. Finally, the judge said to himself, "Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!" (Luke 18:4-5)

Like this woman, I pursued God persistently over a family member's salvation. Dom, my mother's second husband, was a self-proclaimed "educated" man who would have nothing to do with God. My siblings and I shared God's love and truth with him for twelve long years, even enduring his anger when we wanted to attend church services on Christmas Eve. I recall him once yelling, "Why do you kids have to go to church tonight? Christmas isn't about God, it's about family!" Actually, I thought to myself, Christmas is about God.

Ultimately, Dom died of a terminal illness—but not before my mother had the privilege of hearing him ask Jesus Christ to be his Savior, just two days before he entered eternity. This stubborn old man is now in the presence of God forever, and his story reminds us never to give up. Trust God's timing, and never give up.

Whether we are close to our extended family or not, we can pray for them. As we thank God for our relatives, we can pray blessings on their lives. We can pray for their needs—even basic ones like wisdom and energy for daily living. We can pray for the generations to come, that they will know the Lord and serve Him. We can ask God to bless and protect those who are like family to us—our friends, neighbors, church family, and others.

Even when we don't know what to pray, ask God to bless your extended family, knowing that He understands their every need. Just like the scripture says.

Prayer: Lord, I ask that my extended family members will know and experience Your wisdom each day. May they find that wisdom is more precious than rubies, and godly understanding better than gold. Nothing they desire on earth can compare with knowing You and following Your ways. Some of them are far from You, Lord. I pray they would learn the ways of Your wisdom, the pleasantness of Your paths, and the peace that You bring. Amen.

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